

SOKOLSKY'S LETTER

NOTE: This letter was sent by Sokolsky at Peking, China, to Jacob deHaas, Secretary of the Provincial Executive Committee of General Zionist Affairs. President of this group was Rabbi Stephen Wise (with an extensive red record) and Hon. President, Justice Louis Brandeis, whose wife and daughter solicited funds for the communist Commonwealth College, Mena, Ark.

Grand Hotel de Pekin
Pekin, China
April 4, 1918

My dear DeHaas:

I suppose you were quite surprised to read my signature on the bottom of this letter, but we all had to get out of Petrograd rather rapidly — the Bolshevik government as well as all the foreigners and I came to Pekin for want of a better place. I am waiting for some money from America — it cost me about 4,000 roubles all told to make the get-away from Tovanihville and while I am here I am looking for some work in the East. If it does not turn up I shall soon be home, I suppose and in a training camp — but the likelihood is that it will turn up.

Conditions in Russia were quite bad. In Petrograd there was no food and a dangerous, false, over-stimulated political atmosphere prevented anyone from sanely considering a way out. In Eastern Russia and in Siberia there is plenty of food, but the people are apathetic and unable to grasp the events which are transpiring. The Bolsheviks are everywhere in control until one reaches Manchuria where the Chinese troops and police become an important factor. The Cossacks are a joke. I had lunch with the Simeonoffsky Polk at their club in Manchuria. They are boasters and nothing more. Simeonoff is bitterly anti-Semitic and every effort should be made to prevent a Cossack reaction in Russia. It will prove disastrous to our people.

Everywhere in Siberia one meets Jews. They are very successful as merchants and seem to have transplanted themselves with great rapidity from Lithuania to the Steppe. In Omsk I met quite a group. They have a synagogue and are quite respectable. They do not anticipate good times. The Bolshevik organization in Omsk is entirely Jewish. It is efficient and very powerful; but its efforts at preventing profiteering and hoarding and its free use of machine guns has created great antagonism among the wealthy citizens and if the Chinese or Japanese or Cossacks get Siberia, there will be trouble for the Jews. There seems to be no anti-Semitism anywhere, but there is an anti-Bolshevik sentiment — and Bolshevism and Judaism are becoming synonymous in the public's mind.

I lived in a village Veres Chagino, a week. I found no anti-Semitism. Instead I heard this: "Before we were governed by the Germans; now, by the Jews. The Russians cannot govern themselves." In this village there were only three Jews — members of the local Soviet.

In Manchuria some Americans were lost. I went in search. Every disorderly house, every saloon — the town is like one of our movie mining towns — everything of that nature was owned by a Jew. The girls were mainly Jews. (I found the boys drunk in Simeonoff's Club.)

Harbin has an enormous Jewish population. The town is becoming an important center. The Jews have great stores and some talk even Chinese. They have a beautiful synagogue. They can be seen buying and selling money on the streets. A Chinese friend of mine, Mr. Lu Tai, who owns a great deal of property in Harbin



Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, who said:
"Some call it communism; I call it Judaism."

told me that the Chinese prefer to deal with Jews rather than with Russians because the Jews can be trusted; they may drive a bargain but they will stick to their agreements once they are reached. The Russians are quite different. They promise everything but fail to perform. Lu Tai further says that Jews are valuable to Chinese merchants because of their connections everywhere. A Harbin Jew can put across a job in Odessa or Petrograd or New York or even Berlin at the present moment.

Your telegrams concerning trading with the enemy were rather ill-timed. The British propaganda had gone too far in Russia on Zionism. It got to look as though Palestine had been given to the Jews to provide propaganda material in Russia. No publicity was given your telegrams. It was held in the strictest confidence by the Embassy, the Zionists, and the few others who knew of it. Jews throughout Russia are trading with the enemy; now, because the country is at peace; before, because there was no patriotism. But the Russian Jew is not the only one who trades with the enemy. Petrograd was full of American Jews who through Swedish agents were doing business with Germany. One of these is a mutual friend and has strong Zionist connections. I got wind of the fact that he was being investigated by the Commercial Attache and the Military Mission. Simultaneously with his getting into trouble (without his knowing it) he was representing himself as a prominent Zionist and an organizer of the Provisional Committee of which Judge, etc., etc. It was a little embarrassing for me, because I was asked about the fellow. My reply was this. "Here is a copy of the American Jewish Year Book, 1917-1918 edition, look up the Provisional Zionist Committee. Furthermore, if you want advice on the Zionist situation follow the policy of the British officials. They go directly to the Petrograd Zionist Organization, to Mr. Rosoff and Mr. Goldberg and Dr. Katznelson and find out what they want to know." I am purposely not giving names because they are unnecessary. The matter automatically closed when the get-away from Petrograd took place.

My suggestion to the organization, now that Zionism has become important, is this: a little pamphlet should be got up, giving the aims of Zionism, its institutions, its history, and a list of its American officers. This pamphlet should be sent for filing purposes to every Embassy and Legation, Consulate and Commercial Attache abroad.

The value of it would be that persons seeking to ingratiate themselves with American officials abroad who have an eye for a vote, would be unable to talk about their great Jewish backing because of their importance in the Zionist movement. When Zionism became popular in Petrograd, there was a bit of this and it was rather annoying.

I wrote you a letter about the Petrograd organization. It is very effective and well organized. Mr. B. Goldberg is the practical head and I am enclosing some letters he sent you through me. Chasanowitch is doing wonders in Stockholm supplying Jews everywhere with Jewish news. One is very favorably impressed with Russian Zionism as well as the splendid calibre of Petrograd Jewry. In Russia, they want to know what the U.S. is going to do and they are terribly worried by the failure of Wilson to concur in the British Declaration. I don't see how you can get any information to them but if you could, it would greatly relieve their minds.

I wrote the minute of the interview with Francis, the Petrograd Zionists making a few changes as they understood the matter. Francis was up in the air. He could not quite grasp what they wanted and Katznelson confused him further by asking questions which Francis would not answer if he could and really could not because of a lack of knowledge. But Francis was sympathetic and Butler Wright, the Counsellor of the Embassy, told me that he and Francis both were strongly in favor of the movement. Wright ought to be in Washington soon and might be seen. He is very diplomatic, very friendly to everyone, and not always reliable. His training is old-fashioned: he follows the art as well as the science of diplomacy. But see him if you can and get his dope on Russia. If you do not touch on questions which he, as a diplomatist, ought not to discuss, he will be sufficiently frank to provide you with fairly good information on Russia.

My plans are uncertain. I may pull up to Harbin; I may remain here; I may go somewhere else or return home. The best way to reach me is c/o American Legation, Peking, China. They will forward my mail to wherever I am. Please send me — I am sure some girl in the office will be glad to do it — some Maccabeans, etc. I am hungry to hear something about the crowd on 23rd Street.

With Zion's greetings,
Yours,

George E. Sokolsky (s.)

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